

Franconia Water Department Monthly Meeting

Thursday December 12, 2019

Town Hall Meeting Room 4:30pm

In Attendance: Water Commissioners Darrel Dietlein, Joan Hartford and Dan Walker; Meaghan Caron, Water Department Secretary; Peter Hilton, LRW

Public in Attendance: Eric Meth, Select Board and community member; Richard Gaudette, Fire Chief; Mary and Peter Grota

Meeting is opened at 4:34 pm Darrel motions, Dan seconds and all are in favor.

Fire Chief Rick Gaudette joins us to discuss the hydrant fees that are proposed to the town. Rick strongly disagrees. They don't use the fire hydrants and do not have any intentions of using them. Operational cost is supposed to be paid by the users not the general public per what he understands from the original

Mary Grota speaks: The board couldn't answer some of her questions yesterday. When they were put in, what were they supposed to be used for? Why isn't the pressure adequate now? Rick says the volume isn't enough for the trucks.

Darrel states that our system is a volume driven system not a pressure driven system and we don't have enough static head pressure to sustain it. Based on that, the intention was to have the hydrants as a "first attack" system/ not a pressurized system.

Chief says that they train their fire fighters to go to the rivers and that we are very fortunate to live in a town that is surrounded by river ways and sources of water to use when fighting a fire.

Eric Meth speaks as select board member. They are trying to keep the tax rate down. He is also a resident at Dow Academy and they are installing a cistern to have their fire suppression system up to code.

Darrel states that we recognize all that is being discussed and one of our mandates is to the water customer. Because these hydrants exist, we are required to maintain them. We have to find a solution. One solution is to move forward with its operation and make it viable. The other is to "moth ball" the situation. As a Franconia "out of town" resident he *does* benefit from the system's hydrants etc. because of all of the businesses within town.

Rick, as a tax payer, there are 1200 households/taxpayers and 300 water customers. 25% of the town gets the use of the water system., 75% does not. When the bond was taken out, the whole town supported the bond and supported it. Operations of the system was agreed upon to be taken care of by the users.

Darrel asks, if the hydrants were viable and efficiently working, would Rick feel differently?

Rick answers “no”.

Rick states that he believes that there is a “hook up fee” in addition to his meter base fee. Meg will touch base with Holly as there is only a meter fee applied plus usage but Rick is adamant that there is more.

Dan speaks to having to be ready for the potential of the water to be used. The water department has to generate revenue from somewhere to maintain the system as we have a lot of fixed costs.

Because they are already in place, we are obligated to maintain or justify the decommissioning of the hydrants.

Eric urges the commission to think strongly about decommissioning the hydrants.

Darrel explains that we are exploring many options. Getting an official cost estimate for removal and decommission of the hydrants costs money as well. As a taxpayer, Darrel states that even setting a plan for decommissioning the hydrants would be a cost to try and figure out.

Peter Grota speaks to the point of a cost benefit if the department invests now it will save money in the future.

Darrel reiterates the point that our maintenance “credo” for the whole system is to maintain it now to save exponential costs in the future.

Rick asks about the fill speed and capacity of the tanks. If we were to improve the system it goes way beyond just the hydrants and involves improving the pump houses with booster pump stations.

Darrel thanks everyone for their input. We have work to do and this helps us to be informed.

Eric reiterates that cisterns are around town (5 of them) and Rick speaks to a fire pond being more efficient.

Darrel motions to approve the minutes from November 14th, Joan seconds and all are in favor.

Transaction sheet is approved and signed.

Darrel motions to sign the Horizons Engineering agreement adding \$1500.00 in fees and expanding the scope of duties as discussed in the November meeting. Joan seconds and all are in favor.

Joan motions to approve the final read fee of \$50.00 to be added to the rate schedule and for the fee description to be added to the Rules and Regulations of the department. This fee will become effective 1/1/2020. Darrel seconds and all are in favor.

Darrel suggests a work session on the topic of hydrants fee to solidify possible numbers and to finalize the 2020 budget. We schedule this for Tuesday, January 14th, at 5:30pm. Our regular monthly meeting is scheduled for Thursday January 9th. Hopefully between these two meetings we can finalize the budget but just in case we decide a tentative follow up will be on Tuesday, January 28th at 5:30pm.

A discussion regarding the new customer fee that is currently \$1800.00 on the rates schedule begins. The idea of the fee is to recoup some of the costs incurred by the water department when installing the service line to the curb stop. Darrel reads what is already established in the current Rules and Regulations:

"New services will be installed by the Franconia Water Works with all charges billed to the customer. The Franconia Water Works may, at its discretion, require any new customer to have the work done by a private installer under the guidelines of the Department."

We will revisit adjusting this fee in the New Year.

Money to be moved to NHPDIP: Once we are closest to the end of the year we will have the final amount to transfer. A vote will be made electronically via Meg and individual emails. This has to be done before the end of the year. Darrel motions to make the vote electronically once these numbers are solidified. Joan seconds and all are in favor.

Joan's term will be ending after Town Meeting in March. We all thank her for her service to the Department (and wish she would stay!)

Notifications will be sent out to customers who have not made their water payments and who are currently on the delinquent accounts list. There is currently a total of \$18,775.24 due from delinquencies. Included in the water bill sent out at the beginning of January (2020W01) will be the *Shut Off Procedures* notification as well as a "red flag" notification to those customers who hold delinquent amounts informing them that they are subject to shut off.

The shut off procedure states that payment arrangements can be made for customers in hardship. Meg states that she believes that any payment arrangements are approved by the Select Board since the payments all go through Carol as the Tax Collector. It is agreed that the Water Department Board of Commissioners should have the opportunity to review the arrangement before any finalization. This will be stated in the Rules and Regulations of the Department and Meg will make this happen.

It is agreed that a certified letter is the best approach to informing the customer that their account is subject to shut off. Then, one day before shut off the Department makes a diligent attempt to contact the customer one more time by phone or in person to the property.

Pete gives his updates: Franconia tanks were cleaned and inspected and all was good. A few recommendations were made. 1) Pressure-wash the exteriors. 2) A mixer for each side of the tanks for maintaining water quality.

Pete also notices that the fittings where pipes enter and exit the tanks are starting to wear away and corrode from the chlorine and aluminum phosphates. They are all original to the 2009 project. Cleaning would require draining of one half and then the other side of the tank to access the parts. Pete thinks they are ok for a while but will need replacing by 10 or so years from now.

There is a leak on Berwick court. It is so close to the curb stop Pete can't tell where the leak is originating from. The top is missing from the valve stand and has to be fixed anyway. Pete will shut the water off and he will just fix it if it is within his digging area but if it is farther and on the service line it is the owner's responsibility. He will plan to get to this project on Monday or Tuesday of next week. There is another leak on Hubertus Ring Road that he will also attend to.

Sanitary survey was good. No significant deficiencies.

Joan called Electrical Installations regarding the Scada XL Reporter upgrade but has not had a response. Darrel will follow up to see if he can get through to them.

Darrel motions to adjourn at 5:39pm and all are in favor.

These minutes of the Franconia Water Department have been recorded by its Secretary. Though believed to be accurate and correct they are subject to additions, deletions and corrections by the Board of Commissioners of the Water Department at its next meeting when the Board votes its final approval of the minutes. They are being made available at this time to conform to the requirements of New Hampshire RSA 91-A:2.